

The Off-Road Vehicle Permit System For Big Cypress National Preserve

Obtaining a recreational off-road vehicle permit for using an ATV, ATC, swamp buggy or street legal 4 X 4 in Big Cypress National Preserve is a three step process. An operator's permit, an inspection sticker and an annual vehicle permit are required to operate an ORV in the Preserve. Motorcycles and other two-wheeled vehicles are not permitted in the preserve's backcountry.

These permits may be obtained only Friday through Monday, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

1) Operator's Permit

You must come to the Visitor Center located halfway between Naples and Miami on Highway 41. Bring your valid state driver's license. Those who have a learner's permit must be accompanied by a licensed adult 18 years or older who also possesses a Big Cypress National Preserve ORV operator's permit. Unlicensed drivers are not permitted to operate ORVs in Big Cypress.

You will be shown a video and your photo will be taken. Visitor center staff will produce an operator's permit while you watch the video. You are required to carry the operator's permit with you when you are operating an ORV in the Preserve.

It is extremely important that you provide the staff with current address and telephone information so that we may contact you with changes in trails, regulations, etc.

This part of the permit process will take approximately 45 minutes.

2) Vehicle Inspection Sticker

Bring your vehicle to the visitor center. Preserve staff will inspect your vehicle under the following guidelines:

Airboat:

Hull length 14 feet maximum excluding grass rake

Hull width maximum 8 feet

Vessel must be registered with the state and registration number and validation decal numbers must be displayed on the vessel

An orange flag at least 10" by 12" must be flown a minimum of 10 feet above the bottom of the airboat

Must meet all Florida and U.S. Coast Guard rules and regulations for vessels, including lighting and registration.

Must have flex pipes connected to exhaust manifold

360 degree light

Fire extinguisher

PFDs for all passengers

A photo will be taken of the vehicle

Swamp Buggy:

This is defined as a vehicle that has been clearly altered from street legal use and could no longer be registered as such. Most swamp buggies have no windshield and have altered suspension and gearing. They no longer in any way resemble a mass produced vehicle. Maximum speed of swamp buggies is usually less than 15 mph.

Working headlight and taillight

Tires must have a minimum of 9 inches of tread face

Buggy width may not exceed 8 feet

Must have working muffler

Preserve staff will weigh the vehicle and a photo will be taken

ATC (three or four wheeler):

Working headlights and taillights

Tires must have a minimum tread face of 7 inches in the front, and 9 inches in the rear

Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) must be located and will be recorded

Working muffler

Working brakes

A photo will be taken

Street Legal 4X4 (permitted in the Bear Island area of the Preserve ONLY):

Working headlights and taillights

Tires must have a minimum of 9 inches of tread face

Vehicle Identification number (VIN) will be located and recorded

License Plate will be recorded

Preserve staff will weigh the vehicle and a photo will be taken

For All Vehicles:

An inspection sticker will be issued for the vehicle once it passes inspection. This inspection is valid for three years from the date of initial inspection. The sticker will be affixed immediately to the vehicle as follows:

Airboat: steering bar (joystick)

Swamp Buggy: steering column

Street Legal - inside the driver's door or on windshield

ATC - center of steering mechanism

This part of the permit process will take between 10 minutes and 30 minutes, depending on vehicle type and number of vehicles to be inspected.

3) Vehicle Permit:

Once you have obtained an operator's permit and your vehicle has been inspected and received an inspection sticker, you may purchase a \$50.00 annual off-road vehicle

permit. These permits are valid from January 1 of each year to January 31 of the following year - a thirteen-month period. Permits go on sale mid-December each year. 2,000 permits are available each year. All permit sales are on a first-come, first-served basis at this time, but a drawing system may be used as demand approaches the 2,000 permit limit. Permits are not transferable between vehicles.

It is strongly advised that you call the visitor center at 239-695-1201 before you bring your vehicle in. We may be able to save you time and extra trips with a brief conversation before your visit.